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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for motivating primary students to improve their writing skills. The targeted population consists of first and second grade students located in a large urban area. The need for improving writing skills is evidenced by classroom teacher observations, class participation, writing assessments, and student journals. Analysis of probable cause data reveals that students are unable to effectively communicate through written language. Three probable causes are: student's apprehension towards writing, a lack of time spent on writing, and teachers not being adequately trained to teach writing. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of different motivational strategies. Intervention lessons will include graphic organizers, and other tools that will improve students' writing abilities. Post intervention data showed a significant improvement in the students' writing abilities. Students were able to generate ideas with confidence and to write using varied sentence structure. They were also able to produce paragraphs independently and with less apprehension. Students showed favorable progress in using proper conventions. Contains 36 references, and 2 tables and 4 figures. Appendixes contain survey instruments, prompts for writing samples, scoring rubrics, checklists, and graphic organizers. (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING CHILDREN'S WRITING

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for motivating primary students to improve their writing skills. The targeted population consists of first and second grade students located in a large urban area. The need for improving writing skills is evidenced by classroom teacher observations, class participation, writing assessments, and student journals.

Analysis of probable cause data reveals that students are unable to effectively communicate through written language. Three probable causes are: student's apprehension towards writing, a lack of time spent on writing, and teachers not being adequately trained to teach writing.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of different motivational strategies. Intervention lessons will include graphic organizers, and other tools that will improve students' writing abilities.

Post intervention data showed a significant improvement in the students' writing abilities. Students were able to generate ideas with confidence and to write using varied sentence structure. They were also able to produce paragraphs independently and with less apprehension. Students showed favorable progress in using proper conventions.

Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

Student's inability to communicate effectively through writing appears as a consistent educational problem. The primary students, kindergarten through second grade, in the targeted elementary schools demonstrate a need for improved writing skills and strategies to enhance their writing development. Evidence of the existence of this problem includes teacher observations, class participation, writing assessments and student journals.

Immediate Problem Context and the Surrounding Community

This action research project was conducted in three schools in three different communities. Each setting will be described separately as Site A, Site B and Site C.

Site A is located in a large urban setting. This school is in a stable, desegregated elementary school with two buildings; preschool through third and fourth through eighth grade. The main building was constructed in the early 1920's and is a brick structure with the main entrance on a residential street. The second building is a converted district school office. It is a brick structure with the main entrance located off a busy metropolitan street. Both

buildings surround a neighborhood park. The playground park area is a lot that attracts less than respectable individuals from outside of the neighborhood. Therefore, creating a less than attractive environment. The total enrollment for this site is 858, 458 males and 400 females. The organizational breakdown of the student population includes; 290 students in the primary grades1-3, 250 students in the intermediate grades 4-6, and 153 students in the upper grades 7-8. The racial/ethnic composition of the students is: White-Non-Hispanic 53%, Hispanic-22%, African-American 24.5%, Native American-.001%.

The number of students within this population receiving special education services is 107. The number of students receiving bilingual services is 58. In 1997 the mobility rate was 22.6%. This is an increase of 4.6% from 1996. The 1997 rate is reflective of demographic changes occurring in the immediate sub-district due to the steady depletion of aged housing and families seeking economic opportunity. Recent economic changes have resulted in unemployment or employment in lower paying job market. Ninety three point percent of students live in low income families. Ninety (90%) percent of families have limited educational experience culmination with high school or earlier termination. The attendance rate for the school was 92.7%.

In this urban setting site, teachers with a bachelor degree is 55.4%, teachers with a Masters and above is 43.8%. The average years of experience are 17. The average teacher's salary is $45,508.

The site school provides the following programs for their student population; pre-k, early childhood, I.A.S.A., special education pull out program, bilingual education, reading resource progress, speech education. At the present time, this site does not have a consistent reading series for grades one through eight. The math series Harcourt Brace Jovanovich is used throughout all grade levels. Intensive Phonics is instructed at the first grade level. At this time there is no formal writing program. Therefore, due to the high percent of families with limited educational experience, culminating with high school or earlier termination, the progress provided are necessary to assist in developing the students academic achievement.

The districts total enrollment is 76,338. It is composed of these racial ethnic groups; white 10.5%, black, 53.8%, Hispanic, 32.3%, Asian/ Islanders, 3.2%, Native American 0.2%. The socioeconomic status of the general population as of 1990 census reflects the average household income below $15,000. The administrative structure of the district is supervised by a regional district superintendent which oversees a region consisting of other district schools both elementary and high school.

The community housing consists of 37.6% single-family units, 62.4% multi-family units. The rental price of a 2 bedroom unit can range from $300 to $500. According to local real estate agents and community representatives, building costs vary, starting as low as $13,000 and topping off at $80,000,depending on location and condition. Neighborhood Housing Services moved into the area, targeting the neighborhood for housing

revitalization. With the support of local banks and the neighborhood council, the group provides low-interest home improvement loans, technical assistance and insurance counseling to existing homeowners.

Another priority is addressing the high crime rate. Through a community awareness program the neighborhood has been working for three years to reduce crime. A local office is recruiting residents to serve as community watchdogs.

" Six to eight years ago, when many of the Catholic parishes shut down, it kind of shot the community through the heart," said a local priest. Priests and other church leaders have been working with local schools to revive community spirit and have been promoting programs that recognize the community's strong cultural identity.

A major concern for the school and community continues to be the number of graduates who, after entering high school, decide to "drop out". Reasons for such action range from individual disinterest in education, problems in school, teen pregnancy, to the lure of "quick" income in low paying jobs. Although greater percentages of graduates are remaining in high school, the number of students dropping out is still a problem in the community. The community is attempting to take initiative to acquire a GED program with the community. The school is also reaching out to outside agencies to provide needed counseling and social services to assist in alleviating social/emotional problems adversely affecting students. Though the neighborhood's ethnic

profile has changed significantly in the last decade, its economic profile has remained true to its working-class roots.

Site B is an independent, coeducational, college preparatory school for students in preschool through grade twelve. The school community consists of a lower school (preschool-grade 5), a middle school (grades 6-8), and a high school. Students are admitted on the basis of an entrance examination and previous school records. The school is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools and The Illinois High School Association.

This school enrolls 514 students that are a multicultural, socioeconomic mixture of students with many coming from the urban residential setting where the school is located. Nearly one-half of the students commute from suburban communities.

The prices of the homes in this community range from $100,000 to $350,000. The average median home value is $132,000 and the median gross rent is $549. This community is racially diverse.

Site B campus includes 3 classroom buildings, a physical education building with several gymnasiums and multipurpose rooms, outdoor playing fields and tennis courts. There is also an auditorium with fine arts and music classrooms. There is a dining hall and two libraries, including a media center. There is an overall teacher student ration of 1 to 10 and class size ranging from 3-20 students. 100% of all graduating students are accepted at a college of their choice. All graduating students go on to college the year they have graduated.

The school fields 26 interscholastic athletic teams in grades 6-12 with 10 varsity teams. 70% of the high school student body participate on one or more teams.

The school employs 54 faculty members. 35 of these members have master's degrees. There are two teachers per grade level. In addition, each department has its own foreign language, art, music, computer, gym, and library teacher.

The elementary school students consistently score an average of 2 to 3 grade levels above the national average on standardized tests. Throughout the lower school emphasis is placed on reading and writing. Students are provided with an integrated literature-based program composed of listening, speaking, vocabulary, reading, and writing. Kindergarten through second grade use the Open Court reading series, and three through five have a novel based reading series. There is no formal writing program in place at the primary level. The University of Chicago Mathematics Program, which utilizes a problem-solving approach, begins at the primary level.

Grades two through seven take the Stanford Achievement Test. All scores are averages for the grade as a whole based on national norms. Following is a summary of recent test results according to the principal's report. The NPR stands for national percentile ranking.

		Reading Total	Math Total	Battery Total
Grade 2	NPR	78	87	NA
	Grade Equivalent	4.6	4.3	NA
	Percentile above the 50th percentile	84	90	NA
Grade 3	NPR	80	85	83
	Grade Equivalent	6.1	6.3	5.5
	Percentile above the 50th percentile	76	86	84
Grade 4	NPR	79	83	84
	Grade Equivalent	7.1	7.4	7.8
	Percentile above the 50th percentile	87	92	97
Grade 5	NPR	81	86	82
	Grade Equivalent	8.9	8.8	8.5
	Percentile above the 50th percentile	93	85	83
Grade 6	NPR	83	74	78
	Grade Equivalent	9.7	8.1	8.5
	Percentile above the 50th percentile	92	78	85
Grade7	NPR	86	82	86
	Grade Equivalent	Post High School	9.8	12.6
	Percentile above the 50th percentile	88	90	89

High School students score well above national and state means on SAT and ACT tests. The class of 1998 had a median test score of 27 on the ACT test. The mean SAT I score was: Verbal 610 and Math 650.

The school is not assisted through state or federal funding. All monies received come from annual tuition payments. The tuition rate is as follows:

4 year old preschool (full-time, 5 days) $6,000

K-2 $7,150 3-5 $8,200

6-8 $9,200 9-12 $10,290

The school has a limited scholarship and financial aid program. Worthy students who would otherwise not be able to attend this school are encouraged to apply for this aid.

Site C is a K-8 school within a large urban setting consisting of 575 students. The school was built in the 1960's and has a flat, brick exterior. It is located within a neighborhood setting and is identified by its large attractive marquee, which displays current events. Parents are able to look on as their primary children enjoy the physical benefits of modern playground equipment.

The racial ethnic background consists of 0.3% Hispanic, 0.3% white, and 99.3% black. 80% of the students at this site are of low income, receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches. According to our free or reduced lunch count, we have a poverty rate of approximately eighty-five percent. The 1997-98 school year was the first year that this site school received federal funds due to the number of students receiving free and reduced lunches.

The average cost of a home within this community is $75,000-80,000. The average salary made by these homeowners is $20,000-25,000. Grandparents, guardians and DCFS guardians are rearing a large and increasing number of students at this site. Many parents are becoming younger and lack a high school diploma. This situation makes it difficult to provide for parents, the educational and financial support needed by the children.

The staff at this school consists of eighteen regular education teachers, ten special education teachers, on teacher in State Pre-K, five ancillary and twelve educational support staff members. One hundred-thirty students receive special education services, and thirty are mainstreamed for more than fifty percent of the day.

The attendance rate at this site is 93.6 percent, the student mobility rate which is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during the school year is 19.0 percent. The average class size is 29.0 for kindergarten, 27.0 for first grade, and 28.0 for second grade. There are two classrooms per grade level.

The amount of time spent at this site on language arts in the kindergarten through second grade is 800 minutes a week. Students are assessed at the third, sixth and eighth grade level by the state through IGAP in reading, math and writing. The third grade for 1997 was 16.0 percent, where as the state score was 18.6%. The average scores for writing are reported on a 16-32 scale. 62% of children at this site met the writing goals. 30% did not meet the IGAP writing goals, and only 8% of students exceed the writing goals of the IGAP.

The academic goals at this site are in the areas of reading and math. Academic initiatives and programs have been implemented within the reading and mathematics content areas. Students in kindergarten through eighth grade are currently using Harcourt Brace reading series and Heath math series. Intensive Phonics has been implemented in kindergarten through

fourth grade. The McPrep after school reading and math program is in place during the months of September through April. As of yet a writing program has not been implemented at this site.

National Context of the Problem

As human beings, we write to communicate. Learning to write is a lifelong process. Sometimes we teachers forget that our year with a child is just one small piece of that lifetime process. According to Robert M. Knight, "Many if not most Americans approach the task of writing so much as a two paragraph note with dread. They view writing not as a means of communicating facts, concepts, and ideas, but as a survival course fraught with rules of grammar they tried, maybe not very hard, to learn in the eighth grade and have forgotten since" (Knight, 1998 p. 29). Franklin suggested that a growing concern about the general level of literacy in this country has lead to increased emphasis on writing skills in the curriculum. Because of this, preschool and kindergarten children, including children with special needs, are now being asked to memorize, sound out, and copy letters and words and complete seemingly endless numbers of worksheets. Unfortunately, literacy practices focus on isolated skill work at the expense of writing and do not provide young children with the foundation or motivation to learn to write well. Practices that support so-called "natural" literacy learning are a much better alternative (Franklin, 1992). Goodman has argued persuasively that learning to write is natural for young children growing up in a literate society (Goodman, 1986). Studies of preschool children who have not yet been taught

to write demonstrate that natural encounters with print build a strong foundation for literacy (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

In the last 20 years, according to Suzanne Bratcher, the "traditional" way to teach writing has shifted away from a "product" model toward a "process" model. In fact, the writing process has become so familiar that most teachers can recite it in their sleep; prewriting followed by drafting followed by revising followed by editing followed by publishing. This awareness of the writing process has had a beneficial effect on how we teach writing; it has helped us take a "how-to" approach with our students. In the last 5 to 10 years, writing teachers have recognized that no matter how helpful the writing process is, it is not the whole story of how to teach kids to write (Bratcher, 1997). Tompkins reminded us that we need to balance process (how to write) and product (what to write) (Tompkins, 1990). Calkins suggests that we need to watch and learn from our children (Calkins, 1983,1994). Graves states that we need to show children how to write and write with them ourselves (Graves, 1983). Writing is communication and children need real reasons to write. The back-to-basics proponents have told us that correctness is important to communication. Running through all of these concerns are the constant questions on how children learn best.

Between 1980-1989 there were almost 18,000 articles found in the document registry of ERIC that placed a high priority on the teaching of writing (Farnan, Lapp, & Flood, 1992). And yet, a National Assessment of Educational Progress Study of writing over the past 15 years has reported, "There were no

significant changes in overall writing proficiency at grade 4-11...{and} the average proficiency of 8th grade students dropped significantly" (Applebee, Langer, Mullis, & Jemkins, 1990, p.50). For most of what we call our modern education system, writing has equaled proficiency in spelling, punctuation, and the parts of speech. Lessons concentrated on teaching children skills rather than facilitating the use of thought and knowledge. As a result, students function as underachievers on literacy exercises. Children's capabilities lied in grammatical skills; but, their writing lacked, "thought, persuasiveness, organization, or creativity" (Allington & Cunningham, 1996, p.42).

Based on formal and informal assessment there is an ongoing concern to improve students' writing abilities. Therefore, the real issue of this study is how do we motivate primary children to improve their writing skills?

Chapter 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Students demonstrate a need for improved skills and strategies to enhance their writing development. Evidence of the existence of this problem includes; children's apprehension towards writing, teacher observations, writing assessments, and student journals.

Experts in the field site early school experiences that adversely affect young students' attitudes and ability toward writing. According to Graves, children express themselves easily in first grade, but gradually they lose that creative freshness (Graves, 1994). Children of the ages of six and seven use writing systems. They write by using drawings, scribbling, letter like forms, previously learned units, and invented spelling. As stated by Cook, "if we don't begin early writing activities with children, we're contributing to the anti-writing attitudes some children may develop later (Cook, 1995). Children in all three sites present apprehension towards writing. Research literature states that students' apprehension is primarily due to an inadequate development of the writing process, lack of development of oral language skills and insufficient time for teachers to teach and evaluate writing. Calkins suggests, "for many

young writers, writing is deeply embedded in oral language. Speech-like drawing-provides a scaffolding within which the text can be constructed" (Calkins, 1986, p. 57).

Probable Causes

The literature suggests several underlying causes for a lack of writing skills in primary children. All sites indicate a need for more time spent on writing instruction. According to Bratcher, "building confidence in writing takes time. The writing process is a choreographed dance of skills like brainstorming and spelling, clustering and reading aloud, imagining a reader and defining a purpose. It takes time to learn each step in the dance, and it takes time to put the steps together" (Bratcher, 1997, p.157). Teachers need to commit to finding the time to teach children how to write. Teachers need to find time to teach writing by integrating it into other subject areas. Areglado and Gill remind us that integration is a teacher's key to accomplishing much within the short school day. Integration is possible because, by using large blocks of time devoted to one project, we address several subjects at once (Areglado and Gill, 1997). Applying the writing process techniques to their writing in science, math, and social studies will give students more opportunities to write.

Lack of teacher training also appears to be a cause inhibiting the development of writing skills among primary children. A survey of first grade teachers found that few writing activities were designed specifically to teach

students about the writing process and how to use writing strategies (Bridge, Compton-Hall, Cantrell, 1997).

Research has shown that teachers who model writing with their students produce confidant writers. When our students see us write they want to write. They see the value of the skill. Donald Graves has said that, "Being a writer yourself is perhaps the most important thing you can do to help children learn to write" (Areglado and Dill, 1997, p.15). After conducting a Ford Foundation study Graves found that if students had one good teacher of writing in their entire educational career, they could be successful writers (Graves, 1994, p. 14).

If we as writing teachers take research seriously we will want to create a comfortable atmosphere that will encourage students to change their feelings about writing. According to Bratcher, we must create a community of writers in our classrooms. This community must include us and will be a group of writers who accept one another and work together. As we build this community, we must find ways of accepting children's developmental levels and helping children to accept each other. We must be sensitive to the uniqueness of our own classrooms, and accept children for where they have come from as well as for where they are. We must show children how to write rather than just tell them how to write (Bratcher, 1997, p. 8).

In conclusion, the three probable causes identified by the researchers are: student's apprehension towards writing, a lack of time spent on writing, and teachers not being adequately trained to teach writing.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Research shows that there are many effective teaching methods that can be utilized in the classroom to motivate and improve student writing. The researchers have identified several methods such as: teacher modeling, graphic organizers, Power Writing, peer and teacher conferencing, spelling dictionaries, word jars, portfolios, journal writing and writing centers.

Process Writing

Process Writing refers to a broad range of strategies that include pre-writing activities, using a variety of resources, planning the writing, as well as drafting and revising. As stated in NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress), evidence is presented that teaching the cluster of writing skills known as process writing is associated with higher average writing proficiency among students. Students whose teachers always had them engaged in process writing activities had the highest average writing scores (April, 1996).

The focus of process-oriented writing instruction is to stimulate students to think and reflect on their ideas. Writing is an individual activity, and students will often benefit by using some strategies offered by writing teachers. Debra Viadero,

author of several writing periodicals, states that, "We need to encourage students to think of writing as a process that might include brainstorming, some pre-writing revising, and editing. Students need to construct their own knowledge, and the teacher's job is to coach them in their efforts" (Viadero, 1993).

Teacher Modeling

Suzanne Bratcher, a writing teacher from Northern Arizona University, notes that modeling how to write with our own writing is a teaching strategy as old as apprenticing (Bratcher,1997,p.186). Teachers must focus student's attention on the characteristics they want them to imitate. According to Graves, a writing specialist and a language supervisor from the University of New Hampshire, if students had one good teacher of writing in their entire academic career, they could be successful writers. Teachers must truly be that model in their classroom (Graves, 1994, p.17). Many writing programs encourage teacher modeling, such as Power Writing. Teachers must remain actively involved with the students during the writing process. On-going modeling by the teacher, will teach the students how to write (Hamilton,1997, p. 2).

The teacher's enthusiasm during the entire school day is very important. Students will most likely remain focused and will stay on task if subject matter is presented with this enthusiasm. According to Marjorie Frank, noted writing specialist and author, (1995):

> Teacher's enthusiasm is the number one motivator of writing. The teacher's love for words and literature is contagious. An open student-teacher relationship is the soil for writing growth. Every

child should have the chance to write alongside an adult who enjoys the process (p.28).

Many times a student's words are a reflection of their feelings. They can use writing as a means to open up and hopefully face personal experiences. Frank also notes that the teacher is the difference. Teachers should talk about wild ideas, fondest memories, secret desires, and haunting fears. A teacher's honesty is a very effective opener for students' bottled up notions and feelings.

As children begin to write about their personal feelings they should be able to share the experience with an enthusiastic grown-up who delights in the process. Marjorie Frank states, "We may have to be that one teacher for our students. Don't let anyone pass through your life or classroom without being touched by the special power of written words" (Frank, 1995, p.214).

According to Bratcher, " As teachers, when we write with our students, we get better too. Our students provide us with a real audience and teaching writing provides us with a real purpose" (Bratcher, 1997, p.182).

Bratcher continues, as teachers establish their own comfort level, it will be easier to establish the students' comfort level. As the teacher's confidence builds, different ways of increasing the students' confidence will become apparent. As teachers take ownership of their classrooms, their students watch and analyze their own writing. Many times teachers feel as if they are performing when teaching a particular lesson. The performance will get the students to be attentive. Modeling is not the same thing as performance. Our models do not have to be perfect. Imperfect models actually do a better job at showing students how writing happens than do

perfect models. Bratcher states, "As with learning to write, there is a process of learning to model" (Bratcher, 1997, p.183).

Teachers will care more about our writing if they write about issues that matter to them . Their students are not any different . When teachers draw on personal experiences they are drawing from the best resource, themselves. Nancie Atwell, author of teacher's guides for reading and writing workshops, states (1998):

> I learned the difference between role modeling, writing, and talking off the top of my head, between performing and demonstrating. Everything I wrote in front of my kids, was true, it all mattered to me in my life, and none of it was an exercise done for their benefit. Because of that, I'm convinced, it benefited them enormously (p.331).

The students observe teachers writing notes to students and other teachers and posting notes to themselves. They are constantly writing on the board, writing on overhead-projector transparencies and writing on students' work. According to Atwell, "I found stray moments when they didn't need me, when I could sit down at an empty desk and write for a few minutes. I did these things with one agenda in mind, to lend adult credibility to the writing" (Atwell, 1998,p.331).

Observing adults as they work is an activity of enormous worth and power when it defines what is possible. When teachers demonstrate the uses of writing in their lives, they answer the most important question of all about writing: Why would anyone want to write? (Atwell, 1998, p.369).

Graphic Organizers

Using graphic organizers to develop student writing skills can be both fun and motivating for young writers. Patti Drapeau, faculty member at the University of Southern Maine and developer of graphic organizers, states that, "Graphic organizers can be used to relieve boredom, provide motivation, and represent associations. They are teaching tools that appeal to all types of students. They help provide a structure that helps children with limited attention spans stay focused" (Drapeau, 1998, p. 5).

If teachers want their students to improve their writing skills, they need to find methods that will motivate them to write. According to Bromley, Irwin-De Vites and Modle, members of the School of Education and Human Development at Binghamton University, "Graphic organizers are effective ways to brainstorm, plan and organize writing" (Bromley, Irwin-De Vitis, and Modle, 1995, p. 26).

As stated by Drapeau, Howard Gardner identified seven (sic) multiple intelligences that are not often measured through conventional testing. Graphic organizers can be used in a variety of ways to help develop multiple intelligences. They can be used to encourage writing and brainstorming. Students can organize their thoughts before beginning the writing process (Drapeau, 1998, p. 9).

Graphic organizers can help students see a picture of their own information. Kris Flynn, reading specialist for the San Diego County Office of Education, states that most students need to visually process information, and graphic organizers are powerful tools to help them accomplish this. Graphic organizers help students with the writing process (Flynn,1995, p.3).

Power Writing

Power Writing can be a useful tool in relieving student apprehension of the writing process. It addresses paragraph development by presenting main idea and supporting details. This program places emphasis on structure and organization as a base for writing. With the mastery of that base, writers can feel confident about their writing ability. This strategy is a simple technique that can be initiated in the primary grades. Betty Hamilton, a Power Writing specialist, states that as students begin to learn to write, whether at age five or as an adult, they must begin at the beginning. Power Writing offers steps in a sequential plan for teaching a numerical structure to help writers of all ages. Hamilton states, Power Writing assigns the value of : "1st power" to main ideas and topic sentences, "2nd power" to supporting details that explain the main idea, and "3rd power" to minor details that elaborate on major details (Hamilton, 1997,p xiv.). Once students have mastered this process, writing becomes easier.

Peer Conferences

Helping and supporting young children to write begins with encouraging them to read what they have written to themselves as well as the children sitting beside them. This is why many primary teachers encourage children to work in groups and at tables. Interaction will take place when hearing the responses of others about one's own writing. As Graves states, "It helps students to discover what they do or do not understand. The need to help students know how to read their own work and the work of their classmates provides further teaching and demonstration opportunities" (Graves, 1994,

p.108.) As noted by Lucy Calkins, renowned children's writing strategist, regardless of how much children listen to one another, teachers must realize that interactions between students are of primary importance, regardless of how much they listened to one another. Children can also learn to make their written material more explicit through discussion with one another (Calkins,1986, p. 61).

In kindergarten and first grade, many children convey their meaning more easily through drawing than through print. Students eagerly share their pictures with their peers. Drawing therefore, can provide a foundation for writing. Because more information is inscribed in the pictures than in the print, drawing provides a stepping stone which leads the child deeper into writing. The goal of teachers is to help children's writing catch up with their drawing. (Calkins, 1986, p. 69).

By second grade, writing is more prevalent than drawing. Although children may still find it easier to draw than to write, most find it easier to incorporate meaning into a written text than into drawing. Just as in first grade, where the goal was to have writing catch up to drawing, in second grade, the goal is to have writing catch up to talking. Calkins states, " The goal is fluency and voice, for the lilt of oral language to come through in a child's writing" (Calkins, 1986, p.70). In second grade, talking about one's topic with an interested friend seems to be an ideal method for rehearsal. The purpose of discussion is on content, it draws the writer's attention away from conventions and rules. Because the discussions are interactive, writers learn not only that

they have something to say and a voice with which to say it, but also that somebody values what they have to say (Calkins, 1986, p.70).

Students need to be able to listen to one another read aloud their writing, and discuss ideas. They need to concentrate on what classmates say about their work. A classroom should be set up so that when children need readers or listeners they can easily consult with each other and help one another.

When Calkins works with second graders, she often encourages them to interview each other before they write. She tells them to find a partner and a quiet place in the classroom. Then they take turns telling each other about their topics. Soon there are no quiet places in the room (Calkins,1986, p.70).

Teachers need to actively produce a community of writers in their classrooms. This means encouraging students to give and receive peer feedback; it means encouraging students to use each other as real audiences; it means fostering conversation about writing in the classroom. (Bratcher, 1998, p.13).

Teachers should model interviewing skills by interviewing one child and asking others to recall what they do during the interview, or let the children interview one another. As the year goes on the teacher may talk to the children about the importance of listening, or about letting writers lead us to the topics they care about, as well as the need for open- ended questions (Calkins, 1986, p.70).

It is easy to put too much emphasis on teaching the skills of peer conferences. Even if children simply chat with each other about their topics and their writing, these discussions are important. This does not mean, that teachers just turn their backs on whatever happens during peer conferences. It is helpful to listen as youngsters talk together. Calkins began doing this in order to supervise the children, but soon found out her respectful interest elevated the peer conferences in children's eyes. It also became a way to learn about children's interactions with each other (Calkins,1986, p. 70).

Teachers are also there to model different forms of questioning which help students to expand their writing. For some children drawing will continue to be the most helpful form of planning during peer conferencing. For others, talking will be more helpful. Some children, even after talking with each other, will not be happy with their topics. A group approach can help solve some of the developmental differences. Strong writers can offer suggestions to weak writers; weak writers can be an audience for writers who generate and produce at a rapid rate (Bratcher, 1998,p.13). When children interview each other before writing, and when they share drafts with each other during or after writing, their talking often moves their writing forward. There is always more to include, more to tell, and because they are becoming better and more comfortable as writers, they are able to include more and to write with greater fluency.

In a conference, teachers need to just listen. When teachers respond to the content of student's drafts, children will respond in similar ways to the

work of their friends. According to Calkins, " Without peer conferences, teachers feel like Pied Pipers. A huge line of children follows the teacher wherever he or she goes. This line causes chaos, and it pressures the teacher so that conferences become hurried, tense, and less effective" (Calkins, 1986, p.129).

Teachers must remember that they can't expect children to confer well with each other without their assistance. Once teachers teach children to become writers they can then teach them to be teacher assistants. The researchers found that providing students with a peer editing form is a useful tool in enabling students to conference with their peers about writing. Primary students can be taught how to use an editing checklist to proofread their writing and to look for spelling and punctuation errors. Individual word banks, dictionaries, and Franklin spellers can aid in this process. Older primary students can be taught how to use the buddy-editing checklist to proofread another student's writing and look for spelling and punctuation errors, according to Areglado and Dill, language arts specialists from Virgina, (Areglado & Dill, 1997,p. 24).

Later, on another day, the teacher can help the children improve particular aspects of their conferences. Children will learn ways to help each other in a conference when they have had more practice in peer conferences and when their teacher has helped them in teacher- student conferences. In time, the children will sense for themselves the difference between successful and unsuccessful conferences. Perhaps the class as a whole will talk about the

need to let a writer choose which aspects of a topic are most important. Another time the teacher might help children ask open-ended questions. Above all conferences should be natural. They should be full of good listening and honest reactions. Perhaps the best way to extend peer conferences is by participating in them: listening, modeling, and gently guiding (Calkins, 1986, p.132).

Teacher Conferences

Teacher-student conferences are at the heart of teaching writing; it is through them that students learn to interact with their own writing (Calkins, 1986, p.21). As stated by Frank, " The valve that opens fluent, effective communication is an environment where persons can risk exposing their real lives: where the act of telling what one is really feeling and thinking is treated with respect" (Frank, 1979, p.24). Conferences help children reread and learn from what they have done. When a student waves his paper over his head and says, I'm done, I finished my draft, now what should I do? The question of course is what should teachers do. Teachers must not forget to listen. They should focus on asking questions that will draw out more information. The force of listening will draw words out; writers will find themselves saying things they didn't know they knew. (Calkins, 1986, p. 118). Unless teachers begin to understand what their students know, how they know it, and what they value about it, teachers waste their time. If students think teachers don't know something special about them, they may find learning to be an isolated and meaningless exercise.

A teacher's first job in a conference, is to be a person, not just a teacher. It is to enjoy, to care, and to respond. Teachers must let the writer know they have been heard. Sometimes the purpose of a conference is simply to respond. Other times, if the moment seems right, teachers might try to extend what the child can do as a writer. Writing is a process of working with one's own text, therefore, it is important to ask questions of students that help them focus with their work-in-process. A writer needs to learn how to move from the role of writer to critic. When modeled by the teacher, this becomes part of the writing process (Calkins, 1986, p. 118-119).

Conferences must be personal and intimate. The purpose of the teacher/student conference is to help children inform teachers about what they know, so that they can be helped more effectively with their writing (Graves, 1994, p.59). If a conference goes well, the child's energy for writing increases. The child should leave the conference wanting to write. When content conferences work well, children not only realize that the details about their topic matter, they also learn that in order to write well, they must stay focused on their subject (Calkins, 1986, p.127).

Powerful writing comes from looking deeply and honestly at a subject. Content conferences can help students relax about their style and technique, in order to focus on their subjects, and their pieces of writing usually improve as a result (Calkins, 1986, p. 127).

According to Atwell (1996):

> The longer I write and confer with young writers, the deeper the pool of experience from which I can draw potential options for my kids. I tell and show what I know because this is my responsibility to the students in my care: to find out where they are and where they need to go next, and to demonstrate all the ways I know to arrive at the new place (p.221).

The purpose in most content conferences is to elicit what the writer already knows rather than to engage the writer in further exploration. (Calkins, 1986, p. 139). As teachers we must focus on what students have yet to know, as well as what they are discovering. Powers stated (as cited in Atwell, 1991) getting kids to think of themselves as writers can be accomplished through careful questioning during conferences. One of the most effective ways to support children is by looking for questions as they work, questions that encourage more thinking, and ultimately, more writing.

The purpose of conferences, according to Atwell, is not to get writers to revise, but to confer with kids about ideas, information, purposes, audience, language, and format so they can consider what they can do next to make their writing work better (Atwell, 1996, p. 221). Calkins, Graves, and Hansen (as cited in Simmons,1996) all suggest having conferences with writers in order to develop their self-awareness of their writing strengths and weaknesses (Simmons,Vol. 73,1996).

According to Atwell (1991):

> I began to call my class a workshop. I hoped that workshop would convey my intention to establish a place where students would behave like writers, where they would have time, choices, and access to others' responses, just like real writers, and where they could apprentice themselves to an adult practitioner of the craft of writing – namely me, their teacher (p.103).

Conferences with peers, teachers, and parents are a must at the primary stage in order to help students gain that fresh perspective and to reconsider and change ideas and language.

Print Rich Environment

Donald Graves (as cited in Atwell,1998) has compared a classroom organized as a workshop to an artist's studio.

> The artist sets up her studio so it has everything she needs, arranged to suit her and her art. In the midst of the messy and unpredictable act of creating, the artist knows where to find the right palette knife, brush or tube of color. The studio exists for the convenience of the artist at work, just as the writing classroom should exist for the convenience and productivity of young writers (p. 99).

Many researchers argue that young children will learn to read and write if they are immersed in a print-rich environment in which a variety of literacy forms and functions are used to fulfill meaningful activities. Goodman has argued persuasively (as cited in Franklin, 1991) that learning to read and write

is natural for young children growing up in a literate society. Children can write sooner than we ever dreamed was possible. According to Calkins, children will learn to write by writing, and by living with the sense of, "I am one who writes." This self -perception will give children the eyes to see, and they will notice the conventions of written language everywhere. They will learn punctuation and spelling from billboards, environmental labels and books (Calkins, 1986, p. 47). Calkins states that when we give children the time, materials, and encouragement to write, they use whatever they do know in amazing ways (Calkins, 1986, p. 37). If teachers provide plenty of opportunity to write and if their classrooms provide rich literate environments, Calkins believes children will learn quickly (Calkins, 1986, p. 43).

> The written word awakens children's longing to write. When children are surrounded by signs, charts, stories, and poems, they see that writing has a purpose, that print conveys a meaning. They notice words, phrases, and sentences they see around them in their own writing. Educator Brian Cambourne refers to this process as immersion in a print-rich environment, in which children are shown how print works (Areglado and Gill, 1997, p.13). Displaying their work assures children that writing is important, and others respect their roles as writers.

Donald Graves has said (as cited in Areglado and Gill,1997, p.14) that children write "to have an exchange of meaning"; showing student work supports this natural urge to communicate something about ourselves to others.

Spelling Dictionaries

The researchers have asked that each of their students create their own personal spelling dictionary, which is alphabetized with each letter at the top of the page. Students have a tendency to make the same spelling errors over and over. To help young writers, before incorrect spelling becomes ingrained, the researchers have concentrated on the following areas where spelling seems to be the weakest: (a) high frequency words; (b) possessives and contractions; and (c) homophones.

Words are listed on the board each day and students are asked to transfer these words into their own spelling dictionaries. There is a daily scheduled time for students to add words to their spelling dictionaries and exchange words with other students. Students are required to have their spelling dictionaries with them when editing and revising their work.

According to Areglado and Dill, in order for children to become more independent as writers it is important to encourage them to consult spelling resources (Areglado and Dill, 1997, p. 46). Nancie Atwell believes in providing a reference bookcase containing resources to assist the students which includes dictionaries, thesaurus', and samples of writing produced by other students, professionals and herself (Atwell, 1998, p. 98). Hamilton states, students will develop a fear of writing and won't take chances on using richer, descriptive words. If an emphasis is placed on correct spelling this will limit a students' word choice. Utilizing spelling dictionaries, the researchers feel, will alleviate students developing a fear of writing (Hamilton, 1997, p. 29).

Word Jars

Jo Ellen Moore, author of Writing Super Sentences, suggests creating jars with labels for adjectives, nouns, verbs, and for words that describe where and when an event takes place and incorporating these jars into a writing center (Moore, 1998, p. 35). The researchers and students created these jars to provide students with aid in writing sentences with varied sentence structure and word choice. The teacher and the students will continue to add words and phrases to the jars after writing them on craft sticks.

Portfolios

According to Susan Belgrad,Kay Burke and Robin Fogarty, authors of The Portfolio Connection, a portfolio can be both a container of evidence of a student's skills and a portrait of a student's development through the school year. A portfolio shows how the student's work evolves over time (Belgrad, et al.,1994,p.VIII). Portfolios are now seen as an essential part of the educational landscape (Graves, 1997, p. 171). They aid children on a day-to-day basis in the improvement of their writing ability (Graves, 1997, p. 174). The portfolio must belong to the child. When children look back through their portfolios they see where they were and where they are as learners. Portfolios preserve an important history and provide a rich sense of children's present conception of themselves as writers. When the children have the past and present in place in this way, they are ready for a more realistic sense of what they need to learn in order to become better writers (Graves, 1997, p. 187).

Journal Writing

Journal writing allows students to record things they notice or wonder about, express feelings or ideas, and to write about memories. Students must be encouraged to write often and to keep a writing record, journal, or notebook with them to jot down events and ideas as they occur. According to Calkins, "The best way to develop the kind of wide-awakeness that is so fundamental to the writing life is to write often" (Calkins, 1995, p. 24).

Journals encourage students to write about their personal pleasures and disappointments. They provide an outlet for things that happen at home and school. Calkins states, "Journals are above all, places for rehearsal. They are seed beds out of which rough drafts grow" (Calkins, 1995, p. 24).

Younger students should be encouraged to draw pictures or use symbols to begin to write about their lives or express their thoughts and feelings. Research shows, "When our youngsters begin the writing process by collecting bits and pieces-entries in their notebooks, they are more apt to experience writing as a process of growing" (Calkins, 1995, p. 24).

Daily writing time is an important element for the journaling process. It should be the same time everyday for consistency. Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Writing (USSW) provides a set amount of time, about five to fifteen minutes. The teacher directs students to write continuously for a set period of time. Hopefully, this will result in a continuous flow of interrupted ideas.

Teachers need to examine the amount of time provided for daily writing. Graves states, "When students write everyday they don't find it as difficult"

(Graves, 1994, p. 105-106). Students need to write at least four days out of the week. Research shows, "When there are several daylong spaces between one class and the next, children lose touch with their thinking. This is especially true for very young children" (Graves, 1994, p. 226).

During journal writing the teacher must serve as a model by writing in a journal as well. According to research, "When the teacher models journal writing, her primary purpose is to show that journal writing makes sense" (Areglado and Gill, 1997, p. 70).

Other considerations for journal writing are: (a) to suggest writing ideas, but not to require them; (b) to encourage students to always carry their journals or notebooks with them; (c)to share their journal entries with the students; (d)to discuss entries with students who wish to share their perceptions and ideas.

Journals serve as a tool to assist students in goal setting. Goals for current and future learning will be monitored continuously and reflected upon. Research states that, "Goal setting within journals, fosters the development of interpersonal skills" (Burke, et al.,1994,p.75).

Writing Centers

Every classroom needs a designated space for a writing center. The writing environment must be simple and consistent. Calkins states, "Instead of planning each day's new activities and assignments, we need to anticipate how we will initiate, scaffold, and guide the classroom community toward an ever-

deepening involvement, and we need to select rituals, arrangements, and classroom structures" (Calkins, 1994, p. 183).

The writing center should have these tools available to the writing participants: (a) samples of good writing; (b) a supply of papers, pencils, markers, and crayons; (c) models of writing processes; and (d) various sources of information. Using aides in a writing center will increase students' motivation towards writing. According to Frank, "Independence is encouraged because they are finding help on their own. Their writing is building on previous writing experiences-and that's what growth is all about!" (Frank, 1995, p.243).

Project Objectives and Processes

Our objective as researchers is to improve students' writing skills and lessen their apprehension towards writing through motivational strategies and various writing techniques. As a result of increased instructional emphasis on improving writing skills during the period of January 1999, to May 1999, the primary students, kindergarten through grade two, from the targeted classes, will decrease apprehension towards writing and increase their ability to correctly use the writing process. This will be measured by pre and post writing surveys, observation checklist, rubrics, portfolios, journals, teacher observations and conferences.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Student created spelling dictionaries will be developed.
2. Portfolios of student' writing assignments will be maintained.
3. Journals will be developed.
4. A writing workshop will be implemented.
5. Word jars for improving varied sentence structure will be constructed.
6. Graphic organizers will be introduced to generate ideas from students.
7. Skills will be authentically assessed through rubrics and surveys.

Project Action Plan

The following action plan states the interventions that will be implemented by the five researchers in their efforts to improve writing skills at the primary level. To establish baseline data, the researchers administered a survey to their colleagues regarding teachers' needs and attitudes toward writing. A student survey was administered in the five researchers' classrooms to identify students' attitudes towards their own writing skills. The interventions will be put in place in early January of 1999 and will continue through May of 1999.

In January the targeted students will begin creating their own spelling dictionaries and portfolios. This will be followed by journal writing and introduction to Power Writing. Next, the researchers will implement word jars, and graphic organizers to motivate creativity.

PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN

What Action?	By Whom?	By When?	What Resources?	Evidence of Success?
Survey of teachers	All five teacher researchers	January 1999	Teacher made survey	Data about teachers' writing needs
Survey of students	All five teacher researchers	January 1999	Teacher made survey	Data from student attitude about writing
INTERVENTION PROGRAM BEGINS				
Process Writing				
Teacher Modeling	All five teacher researchers	Early January	Teachers	Students model their teachers
Graphic Organizers Introduce Power Writing	All five teacher researchers All five teacher researchers	Early February Early February	Various manuals Power Writing Manual	Less apprehension in generating ideas Construct sentences /paragraphs independently without apprehension
Peer Conferencing	Students	Mid February	Students	Students communicating
Teacher Conferences	All five teacher researchers	Mid February	Teachers and students	Teacher /student communication
Print Rich Environment				
Spelling dictionaries (students create their own)	All five teacher researchers	Early January until Mid-May	Student made dictionaries	Student usage in writing
Implement word jars	All five teacher researchers	Early February	Jars containing craft sticks with words	Varied sentence structure
Creating portfolios	Students	Mid January	Writing projects	Shows growth
Journal writing	All five teacher researchers	Mid January	Student made journals	Growth in writing
Classroom Writing Center	All five teacher researchers	Early February	Paper, pencils, crayons, markers	Student Usage
Assessments				
Self-Writing Assessment Rubric	Students	Mid March	Teacher created rubric	Improved conventions
Post Writing Attitude Survey	Students	End of May	Teacher created survey	Less recorded apprehension on survey
Completed Portfolios	All five teacher researchers	End of May	Completed Student work	Shows growth

Each intervention stated in the left column will build upon the previous intervention, as the writing flourishes. No intervention will be stopped for students if proven ineffective. The five researchers have established a print-rich environment through the implementation of the various interventions.

Methods of Assessment

Copies of the assessment tools used in the program are included in the appendix. The major focus of assessment will be on the progression of student writing achievement as viewed in their respective portfolios. A pretest and a posttest will be given to assess growth. A survey, observation checklist, and a rubric will be utilized to document achievement. Student self-evaluation and peer monitoring will be encouraged.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve writing skills in primary students. Teacher and student surveys (Appendices A, B) were administered in January and after reviewing the results of the surveys the researchers were able to determine an action plan, as shown in Appendix C. The implementation of various strategies began in early January of 1999 and continued through May of 1999. Pretests (Appendices D,E) were administered to determine baseline data. Various rubrics and checklists (Appendices F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P) were designed to assess skill development throughout the action plan.

The program began with each teacher researcher modeling the importance of writing in their daily lives by journaling along with their students. The program continued with students creating their own spelling dictionaries. The students were asked to record four or five high frequency words each day and any other words they wanted to use in their writing. This strategy addressed the students' apprehension to use words they were not certain of spelling correctly.

In February the use of graphic organizers (Appendices Q, R, S) and the implementation of word jars was added to assist students in generating ideas

and writing sentences with varied sentence structure. These interventions were followed by the introduction to Power Writing. This process aided students in constructing sentences and paragraphs independently and without apprehension. Each classroom had a writing center that students could use to complete creative writing projects. This center enhanced children's writing by giving them various tools that allowed them to be creative. Crayons, markers, colored pencils, and a variety of papers were always in abundance at the center.

Throughout the program the students compiled portfolios of their writing projects. The interventions were concluded at the end of May. Posttests (Appendices T, U,V,W) and a post writing attitude survey (Appendix X) were administered to evaluate growth, skill area development, writing apprehension, and comparative gains within the targeted population.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

A pretest, posttest and rubric were designed to assess the effects of the various targeted population's writing abilities. The data were collected after the pretest, interventions, and posttest. This information is presented in Figures I, II, III, and IV and Tables 1 and 2.

The interventions had a positive effect upon the overall growth of the targeted population. Through teacher modeling the students began to understand the importance and necessity of writing as a life skill. Students were able to generate ideas with confidence and to write using varied sentence structure. They were also able to produce paragraphs independently and with less apprehension. Students showed favorable progress in using proper conventions.

They were able to retrieve words through the use of their student created spelling dictionaries and word jars. Word jars enabled students to enrich their writing vocabulary.

The technique of Power Writing provided students with a structured format to organize main ideas and supporting details. This technique relies on the use of graphic organizers that assisted students in visually organizing their ideas, details and elaborations while easing apprehension in the writing process.

Throughout the interventions of this action research project the students created writing portfolios that represented the positive growth of their writing abilities. Periodically, the portfolios were returned to the students and they were able to assess their own growth.

Before the implementation of the interventions, a teacher survey of writing ability was administered. The results of the survey indicated that there was a need for improvement in writing ability. From the results of this survey the researchers developed an action plan. The information from the results of the survey is presented in Table 1.

To analyze growth, the researchers isolated results after the pretest, posttest and the student surveys about writing. Since there was no significant difference among the three sites, this analysis will report the findings in the aggregate. The data show that there was marked improvement in writing ability among the students at all three sites. (Figures I, II, and III). On the pretest only six students received a score of high pass. On the posttest 78 of the stu-

dents received a score of high pass. The interventions did have a positive effect on the overall writing ability of the targeted population. Students felt better about writing at the conclusion of the project than they did at the onset of the interventions. When comparing results of the writing attitude surveys administered in January and May, it was evident that students felt much better about the way they wrote. As shown in Table 2, all questions showed a positive gain. There was a dramatic increase in responses of "strongly agree" as shown in Figure IV.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on the interventions implemented, the students showed a marked improvement in their writing skills and displayed less apprehension toward the writing process. The use of teacher modeling was effective in providing a positive example to the students. Journaling along with students gained their attention and showed them the importance of writing.

Through the instruction of Power Writing and the use of graphic organizers the students were able to logically sequence their ideas into a focused story. They entered assignments with a plan and had less misgivings. Peer conferencing allowed the students to view the written work of their peers and they received positive feedback on their own written work. They gained confidence in their own writing abilities and the ability to evaluate their classmates' writing assignments. Conferences with the teacher proved to be an effective tool for the student when they edited their writing. Students developed a posi-

tive attitude and gained a sense of independence when they utilized their spelling dictionaries and word jars. They showed pride when they saw progress in their writing as they viewed their portfolios. Journal writing became a personal reflection incorporating all of the interventions that had been implemented. Writing in journals became a pleasurable experience rather than a task. The writing center provided a place for students to explore their creativity.

A teacher who is looking to improve writing skills needs to incorporate a variety of interventions and techniques that encompass all aspects of the writing process. Based on the data, the researchers recommend the use of each of these interventions. The action plan is basically a building block of strategies. Using each of the interventions produces a strong foundation on which students can progress and become more enthusiastic writers.

When implementing the program, the researchers recommend that teachers find the time in their daily schedule to allow students to write. Writing daily is a necessity for students. This can be done through journaling, class assignments, and trips to the writing center. Finding a specific time to write each day allowed students to become comfortable with the process because it became second nature to them.

The researchers also recommend that teachers become trained in the art of teaching writing. This can be accomplished through current workshops, journal articles and the latest books written by writing teachers. Teacher mod-

eling, and varying ideas and strategies have a positive effect on the enthusiasm of emergent writers.

According to Bratcher, "Building confidence in writing takes time. The writing process is a choreographed dance of skills like brainstorming and spelling, clustering and reading aloud, imagining a reader and defining a purpose. It takes time to learn each step in the dance, and it takes time to put the steps together" (Brachter, 1997, p.157).

Table 1
Teacher Survey of Writing Ability
N = 50

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Students' thoughts are logically sequenced in their writing.	4%	50%	38%	8%
2. Students use appropriate punctuation and grammar in their writing.	6%	46%	38%	10%
3. Students use elaboration in their writing.	4%	36%	48%	12%
4. Students utilize a prewriting (brainstorming) process.	14%	52%	30%	4%
5. Students maintain a clear focus throughout their writing.	4%	32%	58%	6%

Question	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
6. How often do you evaluate your students' writing?	20%	56%	22%	2%
7. Do you use a rubric to assess your students' writing?	16%	44%	18%	22%

Question	4 or more	2 – 4	1 – 2	0 - 1
8. How many hours per week do you devote to writing instruction?	14%	28%	44%	14%

Question	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9. How would you rate your own writing skills?	44%	54%	0%	2%
10. How would you rate your students' overall writing ability?	4%	40%	44%	12%

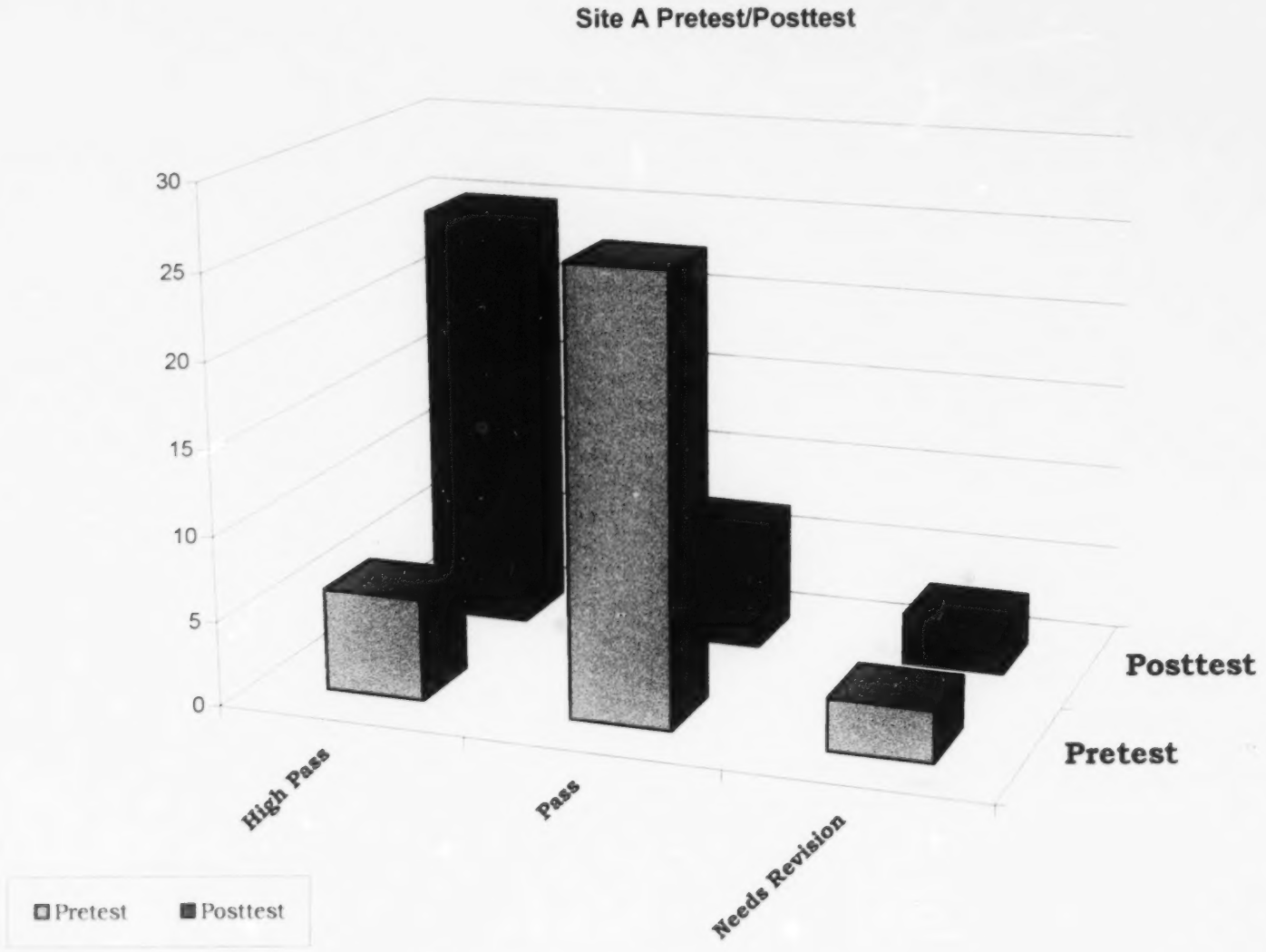

Figure I. Reflects the Results of the Scores on the Writing Pretest and Posttest

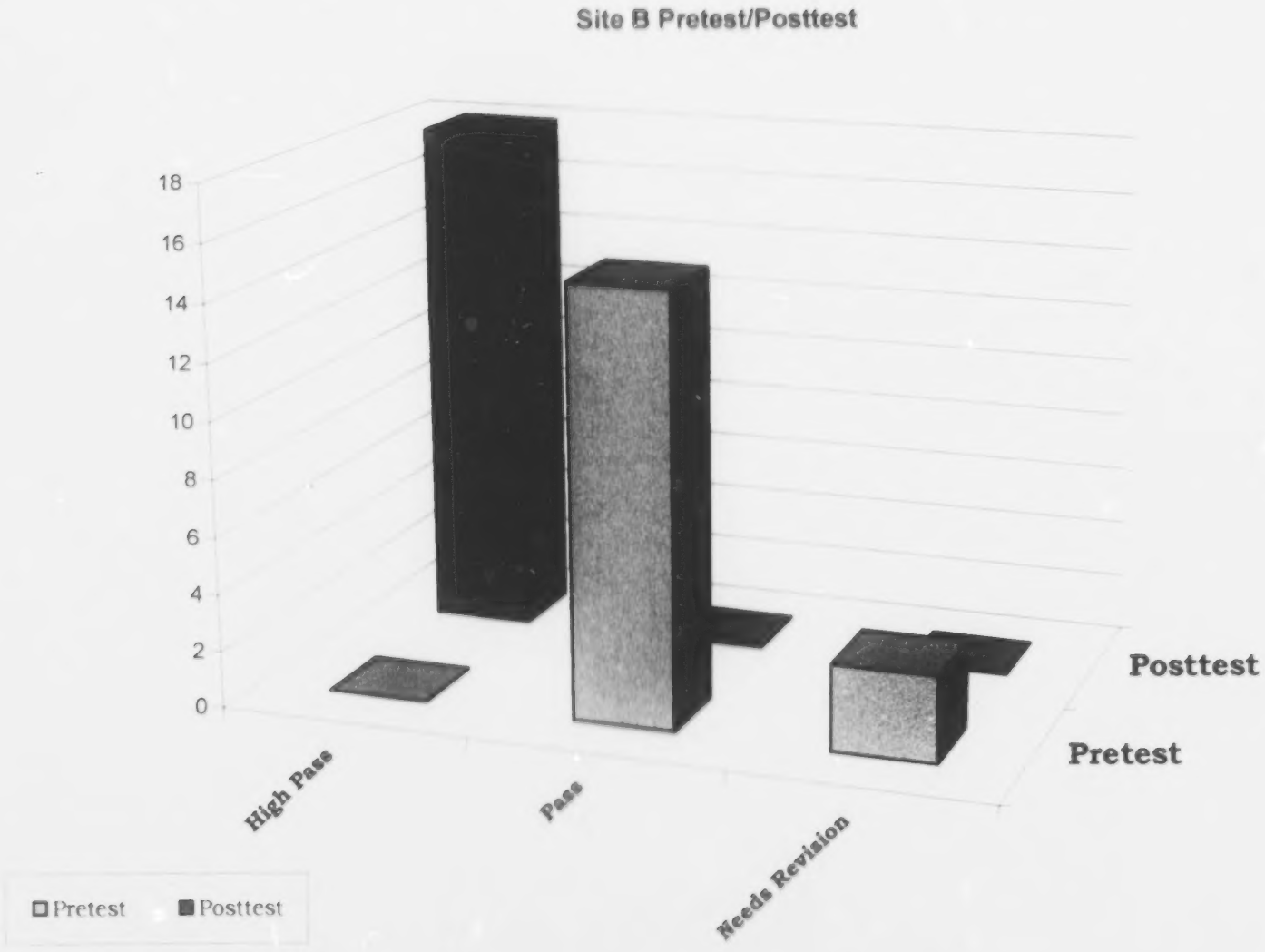

Figure II. Reflects the Results of the Scores on the Writing Pretest and Posttest

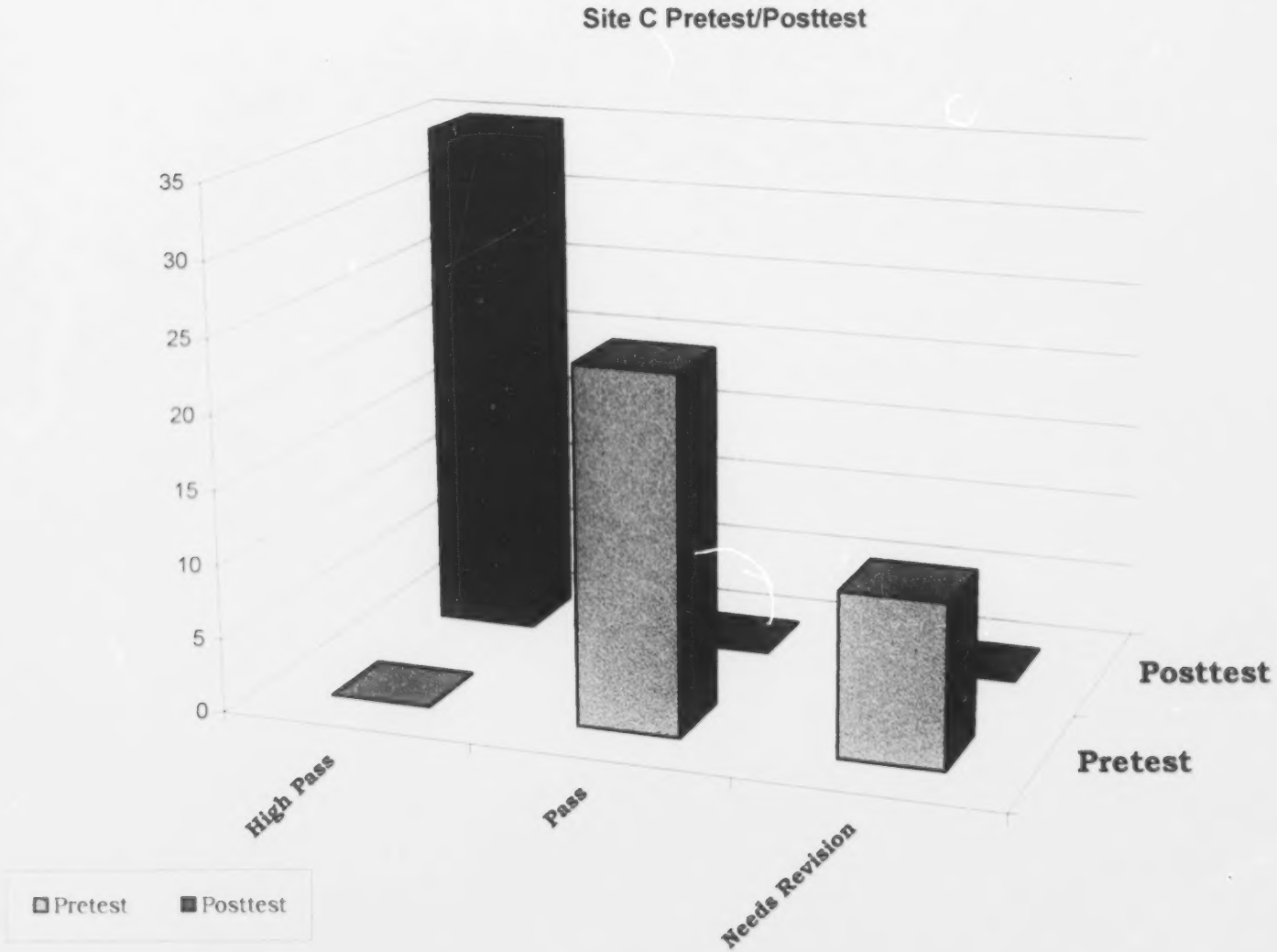

Figure III. Reflects the Results of the Scores on the Wrting Pretest and Posttest

Table 2
Student Survey Writing Results
n = 84

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1. I like to write.	69%	82%	25%	15%	6%	2%
2. I find it easy to write.	37%	61%	40%	39%	23%	0%
3. I think writing is important.	67%	87%	20%	12%	13%	1%
4. I like to write at school.	60%	75%	23%	18%	18%	7%
5. I like to write at home.	52%	55%	29%	39%	19%	6%
6. I am proud of what I write.	51%	77%	38%	18%	11%	2%
7. I am good at putting ideas on paper.	48%	77%	37%	20%	15%	2%
8. Writing helps me tell what I have learned.	60%	79%	26%	20%	14%	1%
9. I am able to correct my writing.	45%	82%	29%	14%	26%	2%
10. I write different types of stories.	64%	88%	19%	11%	17%	1%

	☺		😐		☹	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
11. What kind of writer do you think you are?	61%	87%	31%	11%	8%	2%

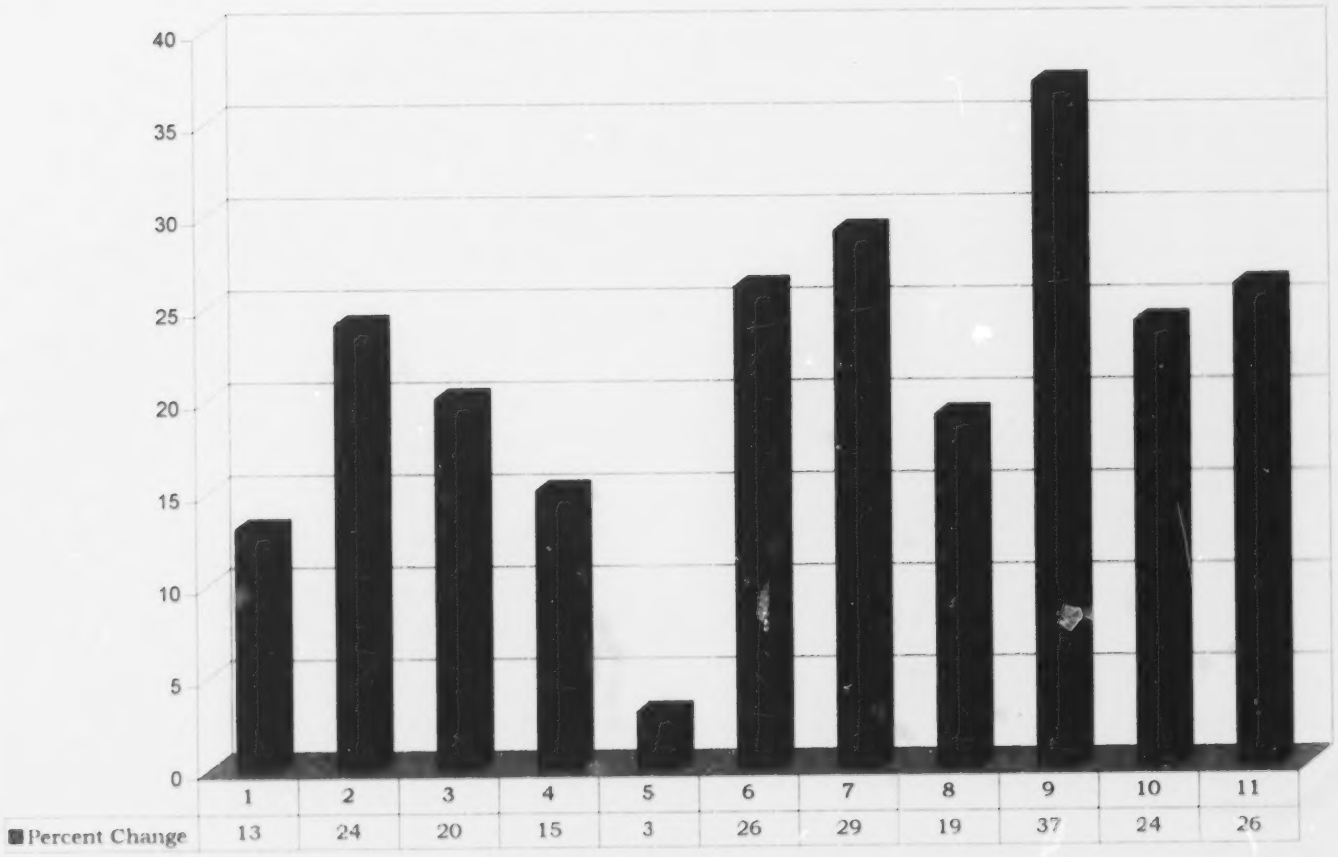

Figure IV. Percent Change of Student Responses on the Student Survey Writing Results, Strongly Agree

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Appendices

Appendix A

Teacher Survey of Writing Ability

Directions: Please circle the most appropriate response.

1. **Students' thoughts are logically sequenced in their writing.**

strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) strongly disagree (1)

2. **Students use appropriate punctuation and grammar in their writing.**

Strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) strongly disagree (1)

3. **Students use elaboration in their writing.**

Strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) strongly disagree (1)

4. **Students utilize a prewriting (brainstorming) process.**

Strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) strongly disagree (1)

5. **Students maintain a clear focus throughout their writing.**

Strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) strongly disagree (1)

6. **How often do you evaluate your students' writing?**

Always (4) frequently (3) sometimes (2) never (1)

7. **Do you use a rubric to assess your student's writing?**

Always (4) frequent (3) sometimes (2) never (1)

PLEASE TURN PAGE FOR REMAINING QUESTIONS.

Appendix A (continued)

8. **How many hours per week do you devote to writing instruction?**

   4 or more 2-4 1-2 0-1

9. **How would you rate your own writing skills?**

   Excellent good fair poor

10. **How would you rate your students' overall writing ability?**

    Excellent good fair poor

Appendix B

Student Writing Attitude Survey- Pre Intervention

1. I like to write.

2. I find it easy to write.

3. I think writing is important.

4. I like to write at school.

5. I like to write at home.

6. I am proud of what I write.

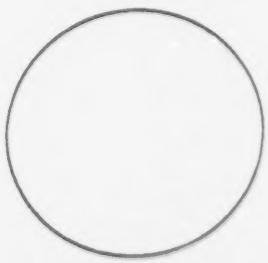
7. I am good at putting ideas on paper.

8. Writing helps me tell what I have learned.

9. I am able to correct my writing.

10. I write different types of stories.

11. What kind of writer do do you think you are?



Appendix C

PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN

What Action?	By Whom?	By When?	What Resources?	Evidence of Success?
Survey of teachers	All five teacher researchers	January 1999	Teacher made survey	Data about teachers' writing needs
Survey of students	All five teacher researchers	January 1999	Teacher made survey	Data from student attitude about writing
INTERVENTION PROGRAM BEGINS				
Process Writing				
Teacher Modeling	All five teacher researchers	Early January	Teachers	Students model their teachers
Graphic Organizers	All five teacher researchers	Early February	Various manuals	Less apprehension in generating ideas
Introduce Power Writing	All five teacher researchers	Early February	Power Writing Manual	Construct sentences /paragraphs independently without apprehension
Peer Conferencing	Students	Mid February	Students	Students communicating
Teacher Conferences	All five teacher researchers	Mid February	Teachers and students	Teacher / student communication
Print Rich Environment				
Spelling dictionaries (students create their own)	All five teacher researchers	Early January until Mid-May	Student made dictionaries	Student usage in writing
Implement word jars	All five teacher researchers	Early February	Jars containing craft sticks with words	Varied sentence structure
Creating portfolios	Students	Mid January	Writing projects	Shows growth
Journal writing	All five teacher researchers	Mid January	Student made journals	Growth in writing
Classroom Writing Center	All five teacher researchers	Early February	Paper, pencils, crayons, markers	Student Usage
Assessments				
Self-Writing Assessment Rubric	Students	Mid March	Teacher created rubric	Improved conventions
Post Writing Attitude Survey	Students	End of May	Teacher created survey	Less recorded apprehension on survey
Completed Portfolios	All five teacher researchers	End of May	Completed Student work	Shows growth

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Appendix D

Prompt for a Writing Sample — Grade 1

Student Writing Sample

Name _____ Date _____

Writing Situation

Some children like to play ball. Some children like to ride bikes or jump rope. What do you like to do?

Directions for Writing

Write about what you like to do. Put capital letters at the beginning of your sentences and periods at the end. Spell the words the way they sound.

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Appendix E

Student Writing Sample

Pretest

Second Grade

Name_____ Date_____

Writing Prompt

Spring is coming. In some places the weather gets warmer and warmer. What is the weather like in the Chicago area in the spring? What do you like best about spring?

Directions for writing

Write about spring. Tell about the weather. Tell what you like best about spring. Use correct capitals and periods. Spell the words as correctly as you can.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Appendix F

Scoring Rubric — Grade 1

Score 3: *High Pass*

Student

- responds to prompt.
- writes more than one complete sentence using capitals and punctuation.
- uses spelling (both real and invented/phonetic) that does not inhibit reader's understanding.

Score 2: *Pass*

Student

- responds to prompt.
- expresses complete thoughts, although may not use standard sentences.
- attempts to spell words using correct initial and/or ending consonants and demonstrates understanding of word boundaries.

Score 1: *Needs Revision*

Student

- may not respond to prompt.
- expresses self in ways that inhibit reader's understanding.
- does not demonstrate understanding of sound/symbol relationships or of word boundaries.

Score 0: *No Response*

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Appendix G

First Grade Writing Rubric **Week: _____ Date: _____**

Name	Highly Skilled	Moderately Skilled	Skilled	Poorly Skilled	Unskilled	Does Not Apply	Total
	5	4	3	2	1	DNA	
Printing is neat and easy to read.							
Puts spaces between words.							
Forms a complete sentence.							
Starts sentences with a capital letter.							
Capitalizes proper nouns and the pronoun I.							
Ends with a period.							
Uses Phonetic Spelling to write complete sentences.							
Sentences tell feelings or ideas							
Writing goes above and beyond what was required (creativity, extra effort, etc.).							
Correctly uses writing process. __ pre-writing __ writing __ revising __ publishing							
Keeps a journal using words, sentences, drawings, and phonetic spelling.							
Comments							

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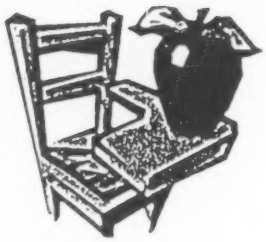

Appendix H

First Grade Writing Rubric

Criteria	Highly skilled	Moderately skilled	Poorly skilled	Unskilled
Forms complete sentences	4	3	2	1
Starts sentences with a capital letter	4	3	2	1
Ends sentences with correct punctuation	4	3	2	1
Capitalizes the pronoun I	4	3	2	1
Prints neatly so others can read	4	3	2	1
Leaves space between words	4	3	2	1
Prints small letters the appropriate size	4	3	2	1
Prints tall letters the appropriate size	4	3	2	1

Appendix I

Teacher Observation Checklist

Teacher Observation Checklist	Printing is neat and easy to read	Puts spaces between words	Forms a complete sentence	Starts sentences with a capital letter	Ends with a period	Uses Phonetic Spelling and Spelling Dictionaries	Comments

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Appendix J
Teacher Observation Checklist

Teacher Observation Checklist	Uses writing process: pre-writing	writing	revising	publishing			Comments:

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Appendix K

Scoring Rubric — Grade 2

Score 3: *High Pass*

Student

- responds to prompt.
- writes several sentences using capitals and ending punctuation.
- uses spelling (both real and invented/phonetic) that does not inhibit reader's understanding.

Score 2: *Pass*

Student

- responds to prompt.
- expresses complete thoughts although sentences may be fragments or run on.
- uses spelling (both real and invented/phonetic) that, for the most part, does not inhibit the reader's understanding.

Score 1: *Needs Revision*

Student

- may not respond to prompt.
- expresses self in ways that inhibit reader's understanding.
- does not demonstrate understanding of sound/symbol relationships or of word boundaries.

Score 0: *No Response*

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Appendix L

Second Grade Writing Rubric

Criteria	Highly skilled	Moderately skilled	Poorly skilled	Unskilled
Forms complete sentences	4	3	2	1
Starts sentences with a capital letter	4	3	2	1
Capitalizes proper nouns	4	3	2	1
Capitalizes the pronoun I	4	3	2	1
Ends sentences with proper punctuation	4	3	2	1
Revises and edits writing with help	4	3	2	1
Prints neatly so others can read	4	3	2	1
Writes with imagination	4	3	2	1

Total Points

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Appendix M

Name _____ Date _____

My Second Grade Editing Checklist

	Yes	No	I fixed it.
1. Did I end each sentence with a **period**, an **exclamation point**, or a **question mark**?			
2. Did I start each sentence with a **capital letter**?			
3. Did I use **quotation marks** to show when someone is talking?			
4. Did I use my **dictionary** to check my spelling?			
5. Did I **circle** any words I think are misspelled?			

Remember: If you answered **no** to any of the questions, try your best to fix your mistakes.

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Appendix N

Name _____ **Date** _____

My Second Grade Revision Checklist

	Yes	No	I fixed it.
1. Does my writing **make sense**?			
2. Does it **sound right**?			
3. Do I have enough **details**?			
4. Do I have a **beginning**, **middle**, and **end**?			
5. Does my **title** match the story?			

Remember: If you answered **no** to any of the questions, add or take out information until your story **makes sense**.

Buddy's Name _____ Date _____

My Second Grade Buddy Editing Checklist

	Yes	No	I fixed it.
1. Did my partner end each sentence with a **period**, an **exclamation mark**, or a **question mark**?			
2. Did my partner start each sentence with a **capital letter**?			
3. Did my partner use **quotation marks** to show when someone is talking?			
4. Did my partner use my **dictionary** to check his or her spelling?			
5. Did my partner **circle** any words he or she thinks are misspelled?			

Remember: If your buddy answered **no** to any of the questions, work together to fix your mistakes.

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Appendix P

Buddy's Name _____ Date _____

My Second Grade Buddy Revision Checklist

	Yes	No	I fixed it.
1. Does my partner's writing **make sense**?			
2. Does it **sound right**?			
3. Does my partner have enough **details**?			
4. Does my partner have a **beginning**, **middle**, and **end**?			
5. Does my partner's **title** match the story?			

Remember: If your buddy answered **no** to any of the questions, work together to fix your writing.

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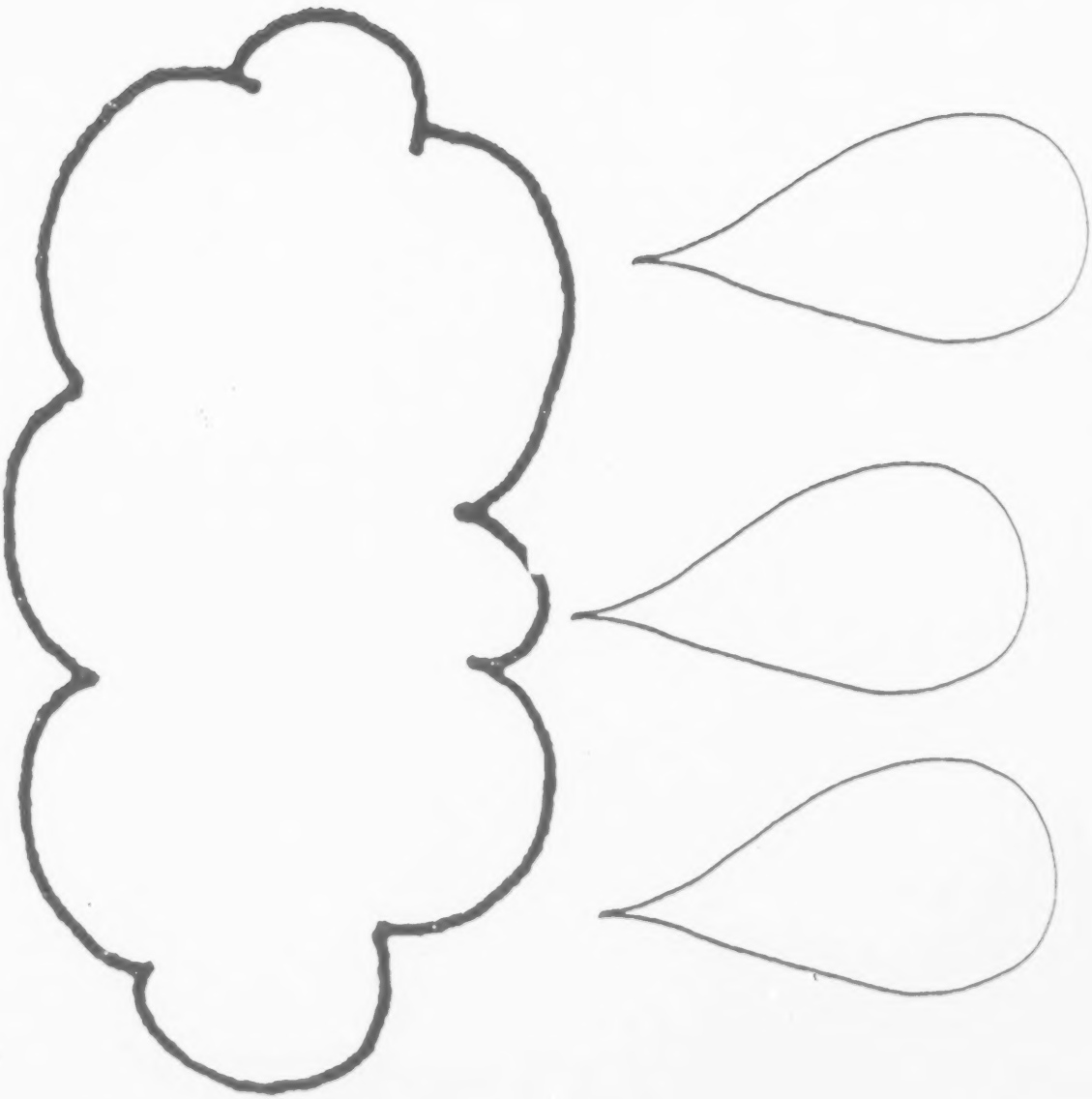
Appendix R
Graphic Organizer



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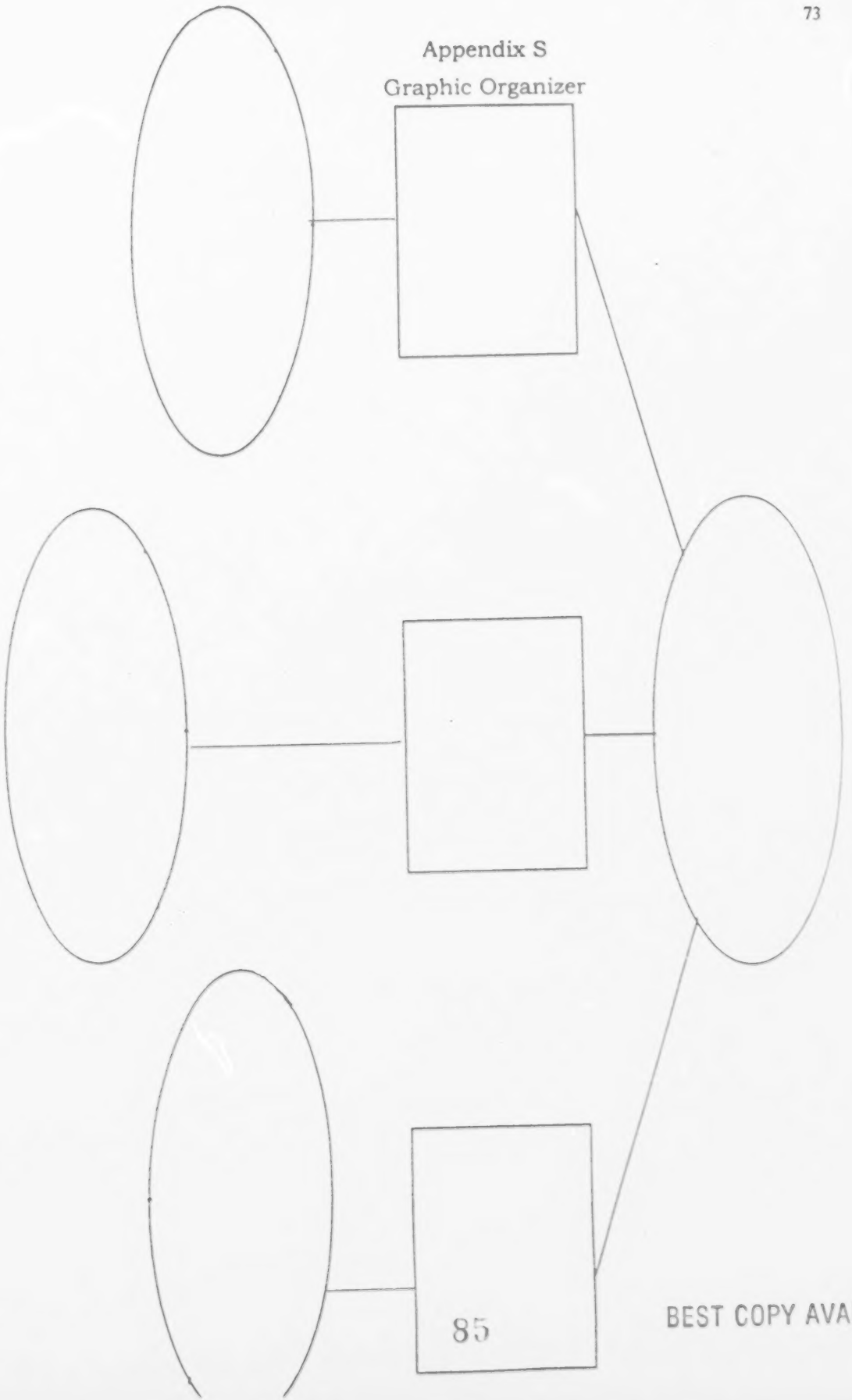
Appendix S

Graphic Organizer



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Appendix T

Prompt for a Writing Sample — Grade 1

Student Writing Sample

Name _____ Date _____

Writing Situation

Children like do different things after school. Some ride bikes or roller blade. What do you like?

Directions for Writing

Write about three things you like to do after school. Put capital letters at the beginning of your sentences and periods at the end. Use your Spelling Dictionary to help you spell words.

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Appendix U

Student Writing Sample

Posttest

Second Grade

Writing Prompt

Second grade is almost over. Think of the many great memories you have of all the wonderful things we have done this year. What was second grade like? What did you like the best?

Directions for writing

Write about second grade. Tell about your three favorite memories. Use correct capitals and periods. Spell the words as correctly as you can.

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Appendix V

Prompt for a Writing Sample-Grade 1

Student Writing Sample

Name_____ Date_____

Writing Situation

What are three great things that you have done in your class this school year?

Directions for Writing

Write about three great things that you have done in your class this school year. Put capital letters at the beginning of your sentences and periods at the end. Spell the words the way they sound.

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Appendix W

Prompt for a Writing Sample-Grade 2

Student Writing Sample

Name_____ Date_____

Writing Situation

What are three great things that you have done in your class this school year?

Directions for Writing

Write about three great things that you have done in your class this school year. Put capital letters at the beginning of your sentences and periods at the end. Spell the words the way they sound.

Appendix X
Student Writing Attitude Survey-Post Intervention

1. I like to write.

2. I find it easy to write.

3. I think writing is important.

4. I like to write at school.

5. I like to write at home.

6. I am proud of what I write.

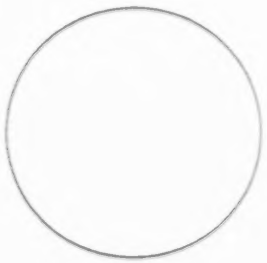
7. I am good at putting ideas on paper.

8. Writing helps me tell what I have learned.

9. I am able to correct my writing.

10. I write different types of stories.

11. What kind of writer do do you think you are?



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